MINISTRY OF Northern Development, Mines and Forestry

2010-2011

ODA Accessibility Plan

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Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act AODA, 2005 sets out the roadmap to make Ontario accessible by 2025. Under this act, accessibility standards are being developed and implemented to break down barriers in key areas of everyday life.

These standards will increase accessibility for people with disabilities in the areas of customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation and the built environment.

The government of Ontario is preparing to lead the way towards an accessible province. In 2010 the government of Ontario was the first public service organization to report compliance with the first standard — Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation (Ontario Regulation 429/07).

As we await for the additional standards under AODA, we are guided by the Ontario Human Rights Code and obligations set out in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

Each year, the government sets the course to prevent, identify and remove barriers through annual accessibility plans required under the ODA.

Building on last year's plan, the 2010-11 accessibility plans will continue moving the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry towards the goal of an accessible province for all Ontarians.

To view other ministries' Accessibility Plans please visit: Ontario.ca

Report on Accessibility Achievements for 2009-2010

FOCUS AREA: Accessible Customer Service Standard

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Over the past two years, the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry has worked hard to achieve full compliance to the regulatory requirements embedded in the Accessible Customer Service Standard (ACSS) by January 1st 2010. Specifically, the ministry:

- Adopted and implemented the policies and practices embedded within the OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy.
- Ensured all classified and unclassified staff completed the necessary training to meet and exceed the requirements specified in the ACSS.
- Ensured that all third party service providers who were deemed within scope of the ACSS were trained to the requirements specified in the ACSS.
- Strengthened and enhanced the established public feedback processes and mechanisms to ensure the requirements of the ACSS were fully met. Of note is the vital role played by the ministry's Communications Services Branch (CSB) as the lead for the majority of accessibility feedback received by the ministry.
- Developed and implemented a service disruption protocol to fully meet the requirements of the ACSS working with our Emergency Management branch to ensure notification to the public was responsive to the needs of ministry clients with a disability.

FOCUS AREA: Information and Communications

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- All staff have been directed to resources provided on the broader AccessOPS intranet site related to accessible document format guidelines and standards, with the anticipation of directed learning opportunities when the new information and communications regulation is passed into law in 2011.
- The ministry provides customers with publications and documents in alternate accessible format when requested, as per established government processes and procedures.

FOCUS AREA: Employment

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The ministry strengthened its commitment to any and all legal instruments which protected the rights and entitlements of person's with a disability in employment practices, such as recruitment of ministry employment vacancies.

Report on Accessible Customer Service Requirements

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into force on January 1, 2008. All OPS ministries were required to comply with the Regulation by January 1, 2010.

The OPS was the first public organization to file their compliance report with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario in January 2010. In order to sustain compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation, it is vital that ministries continue to look for opportunities through their accessibility planning process, to continue embed accessibility in all areas of planning, programs and policies.

Accessible Customer Service Policy and Practices

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: **Ongoing**
MNDMF will continue to implement the OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy, as well as associated practices and procedures, in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (ASCS).

Planned Action(s):
MNDMF fully adopted the OPS Customer Service Policy and Accessibility Guidelines as a key guide to accessibility planning and implementation in the ministry. MNDMF will continue to use the OPS Customer Service Policy as a tool in developing future policies, legislation, and programs and will partner with the OPS Diversity Office and other OPS ministries to ensure a consistent policy approach.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing implementation to October 2011

Accessibility Procurement Policies and Practices

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Ongoing
MNDMF will ensure managers, supervisors, and staff are provided with policies and procedural guidance on accessibility for the procurement of goods and services. The ministry will continue to implement the OPS guidelines for accessibility in procurement.

Planned Action(s):
MNDMF will continue to adhere to the OPS Procurement Directive and the Procurement Operating Policy.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing implementation to October 2011

Accessibility Training and Awareness

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Ongoing
MNDMF will implement accessibility training in accordance with the training requirements of the ASCS.

Planned Action(s):
The ASCS requires the ministry to:

- train staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard; and
- train staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other people who are involved in developing policies, practices, and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

MNDMF requires all ministry staff to successfully complete the OPS Centre for Leadership and Learning's "May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" and "May I Help You Supplementary: Ten things you need to know about accessible customer service training" e-learning courses to fulfill the mandatory regulatory training requirements. The ministry's training strategy includes a tracking, monitoring and reporting process for all training. Training in accessible customer service has been incorporated into the process for new hires (Employee Orientation Checklist) as well as

recurring unclassified staff positions. The OPS Accessible Customer Service Policy and associated practices and procedures is included in ministry training initiatives.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing to October 2011. Initial staff training completed by January 1, 2010. Ongoing training of new staff, including new hires and students during period of January 2010 to October 2011.

Service Disruption Notification

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Ongoing
The ministry will continue to implement and improve on the established accessibility service disruption protocol developed in 2010.

Planned Action(s):
The ASCS requires that "every designated public sector organization...shall prepare a document that sets out the steps to be taken in connection with a temporary disruption..." The ASCS guidelines go further to identify the following four steps:

- the circumstances under which a temporary disruption will be provided and where it will be posted;
- what steps will be taken when an unexpected disruption occurs;
- information that will be included in the notice of a temporary disruption; and
- what alternative facilities or services, if any, can be made available during the temporary disruption to continue to provide service to people with disabilities.

The MNDMF developed a document in 2010 that sets out the steps to be taken in connection with a temporary disruption. The ministry will continue to implement the service disruption protocol at all ministry locations.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing implementation to October 2011

General Enhanced Communications with Person(s) with a Disability: Commitment to Accessible Meetings

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Ongoing
The ministry will enhance its efforts to organize and host accessible meetings.

Planned Action(s):
The ministry is committed to enhancing the accessibility of ministry-organized and hosted meetings. The ministry conducted a thorough review of current best practices within the OPS and other agencies leading to the identification of approaches and practices appropriate to MNDMF

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing implementation through to October 2011.

Continuous Improvement of Customer Service Delivery for Persons with a Disability

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: New
The ministry will use the OPS Inclusion Lens as a means to identify areas of improvement in accessibility service delivery.

Planned Action(s):
The OPS Diversity office recently introduced the Inclusion Lens, a tool for all ministries to use in the review of legislation, policies, programs and services relative to diversity and accessibility. The ministry will apply the tool to current service delivery as it relates to accessibility and encourage staff to take the Inclusion Lens training available through CFLL.

Implementation Timeframes: Ongoing through to October 2011.

Accessibility Feedback Process

Focus Area: Customer Service

Commitment: Ongoing
The ministry has established a number of processes for people to provide feedback on the delivery of goods or services, including persons with a disability or persons who have concerns with ministry services to persons with a disability. The processes include timely response to any feedback and action on complaints. The ministry will continue to adapt and improve on its' accessibility feedback process.

Planned Action(s):
The ASCS requires the ministry to ensure that there are effective processes available to receive and respond to feedback on accessibility concerns. Additionally, each ministry must make information about the feedback process readily available to the public. The ministry public-facing website provides the public a wide range of accessibility feedback mechanisms. The ministry will review the existing processes each year to identify potential improvements. During the time period January 1st to October 31st 2010, the ministry did not receive public feedback on accessibility-related issues or processes. Feedback channels were used to request ministry publications in alternate (accessible) formats; the requests were fulfilled in a timely manner.

Implementation Timeframes: Ongoing through to October 2011.

Information and Communication Commitments

Information and the methods of communication are key to delivering many government programs and services to the public. It is essential that we provide the same quality and service to everyone in the province.

In anticipation of the pending standards guiding Information and Communications, the government of Ontario is continuously looking for opportunities to prevent and remove barriers to persons with disabilities when creating, procuring, conveying, receiving or distributing information and communications to the public.

Accessible Document Standards and Guidelines

Focus Area: Information and Communication

Commitment: New
Develop accessible document standards and guidelines and communicate to all ministry staff for implementation.

Planned Action(s):
Develop accessible document standards and guidelines based on best practices used both within and external to the OPS. Provide communication to all staff regarding the application of the standards and guidelines.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing implementation from October 2010 to October 2011.

Accessibility of Communications Materials

Focus Area: Information and Communication

Commitment: Ongoing
Encourage staff to incorporate accessibility considerations into the preparation of communication materials to ensure that communication products are accessible to everyone.
Planned Action(s):

Provide communication to all staff regarding best practices when sending PDF documents, creating accessible documents (Microsoft work and PDF) and emails to ensure a greater level of accessibility. The ministry will encourage staff to take e-learning videos on accessible PDF and word docs.

Implementation Timeframe: October 2010 – May 2011

Provision of Publications in Accessible Formats

Focus Area: Information and Communication

Commitment: Ongoing
MNDMF will comply with the guidelines and procedures for meeting public requests for accessible formatted publications.

Planned Action(s):
The MNDMF will continue to work cooperatively with Publications Ontario to provide publications in ODA-compliant format. All ministry staff will be provided with ongoing guidance on procedures for responding to requests for publication in accessible formats.

Implementation Timeframes: Ongoing through to October 2011.

Meeting Public-Facing Website Accessibility Standards

Commitment: Ongoing
The MNDMF will comply with accessibility standards associated with the ministry's public facing website, as currently defined in the ODA and as prescribed in the Integrated Accessibility Regulation (pending passing into law).

Planned Action(s):
The ministry hosts an ODA-compliant, public-facing web site that has been developed and maintained at the current OPS web standards. Until such time as the provisions of the new Integrated Accessibility Regulation is passed into law and compliance schedules are determined, the ministry will continue to comply with ODA standards for all new website additions. The ministry Web Coordinator will work closely with the other ministries and central agencies to ensure the ministry is consistent in the OPS approach to web accessibility standards over time.
Implementation Timeframes: Ongoing through to October 2011.

Other Accessibility Commitments

Accessibility Improvement Initiatives to Identify, Remove or Prevent Barriers in preparation for AODA standards currently under development.

In anticipation of the upcoming standards the Government of Ontario has planned several corporate initiatives in the following areas, Transportation, Employment, Built Environment and others. The goal of these focus areas is to make it easier for people with disabilities to travel in Ontario, ensure accessibility for people with disabilities across all stages of the employment life cycle and break down barriers in buildings. Many of the corporate initiatives identified for 2010-2011 aim to support ministries in their journey towards compliance with the upcoming standards.

To review a list of corporate initiatives please refer to the Ministry of Government Services 2010-2011 Accessibility Plan.

Eliminating Barriers in Employment Policies, Processes and Practices

Focus Area: Employment

Commitment: Ongoing
The ministry will continue to identify and eliminate barriers in employment policies, processes, practices or tools for people with disabilities.

Planned Action(s):
As a part of the hiring process the ministry will alert the public that accommodations for persons with disabilities are available on request.
Job ads will be reviewed to ensure there are no arbitrary barriers.
Job ads will be shared with employment networks that assist person with disabilities in their job search.

Implementation Timeframe: October 2010 – October 2011

Employment Standards Development

Focus Area: Employment

Commitment: Ongoing
The ministry will work with HR Ontario and other ministries to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to meeting the accessibility employment standards of the new Integrated Accessibility Regulation.

Planned Action(s):
The ministry will work closely with other ministries, HR Ontario and the OPS Diversity Office to ensure a consistent and effective approach to meeting the accessibility employment standards as part of the new Integrated Accessibility Regulation. These actions will be supported through the strong adherence to all related legislative and regulatory instruments, including Bill 168 and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Implementation Timeframe: October 2010 – October 2011

Commitment to Barrier-Free Design

Focus Area: Built Environment

Commitment: Ongoing
The ministry will meet the standards for barrier-free design of Ontario Government facilities in its facility acquisitions, construction or significant renovation to existing or leased facilities.

Planned Action(s):
Renovations and signage will be consistent to barrier-free regulations and policies of the Ontario government.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing October 2010 to 2011.

Act(s), Regulation(s), Policy(s) being reviewed to prevent Barriers to Persons with Disabilities

In support of the commitment to remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities, the Government of Ontario will continue to review all new legislation, and policies under development to identify and remove barriers.

Commitment to Implement OPS Inclusion Lens in Legislative and Policy Development

Commitment: Ongoing
The MNDMF will ensure that all new legislation, regulation and policies will be reviewed to ensure barriers to accessibility are identified and removed.

Planned Action(s):
The ministry will use the Inclusion Lens when developing or reviewing logs, regs and policies.

Implementation Timeframe: Ongoing October 2010 to 2011.

Glossary of Terms/Acronyms

AODA – Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

OPS – Ontario Public Service

ODA – Ontarians with Disabilities Act

For More Information

Questions or comments about the ministry's accessibility plan are always welcome.

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Visit the **Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Ontario** web portal. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario accessible province for everyone.

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